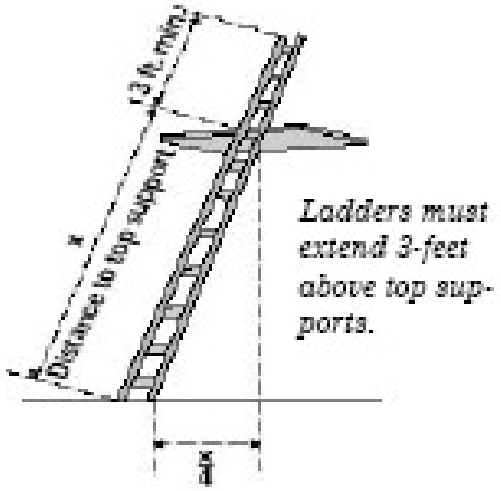
Portable Ladders: Use With Care

Do you put yourself at risk when using portable ladders? Improper use of portable ladders can put you at serious risk for falls. Falls from ladders can cause injuries ranging from sprains to even death. Whether at home or work, use these safety tips to avoid ladder accidents.

- Read and follow all labels and markings on the ladder.
- Avoid electrical hazards—look overhead for power lines before handling the ladder. Avoid using a metal ladder near power lines or exposed energized electrical equipment.
- Inspect the ladder prior to use, don't use a damaged ladder.
- Make sure side rails at the top are secured to a rigid support.
- Do not apply more weight on the ladder than it is designed to support.
- Use ladders on stable and level surfaces.
- Do not use the top step/rung of the ladder unless it was designed for that purpose.
- Maintain a 3-point (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) contact on the ladder when climbing.

3-Point Contact

- An extension or straight ladder must extend 3-feet above the point of support (see diagram below).



Ladders must extend 3-feet above top supports.

- Ladders that are non-self-supporting, which must lean against a wall or support, should be positioned at an angle so the horizontal distance from the top support to the foot of the ladder is about 1/4 the working length of the ladder (see photo below).

For more information about portable ladder safety, visit the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA) website:http://www.osha.gov/Publications/portable_ladder_qc.html